



## Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

[www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm](http://www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm)

### Preventing Fires At Your Office

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), arson is the most common cause of fires in office buildings. Follow your building's security measures and keep unauthorized people out of the building. Keep doors locked after business hours. Alleys and other areas around your building should be well lit. Keep clutter out of halls, lobbies, alleys, and other public areas.

Here are some tips from the NFPA on preventing fires in your office or work place.

#### Housekeeping

Keep waste paper, empty boxes, dirty rags, cleaning supplies, and other combustibles out of exits, storage areas, and stairways.

#### Wiring

Replace cracked, frayed, or damaged electrical cords. Never run extension cords across doorways where people can step on them, or where chairs or other furniture can pinch or run over them. Don't plug extension cords into each other, and avoid plugging more than one extension cord into an outlet. Don't use extension cords in place of permanent wiring.

#### Equipment And Appliances

Leave space for air to circulate around heaters and other heat-producing equipment, such as copy machines, coffeemakers, and computers. Keep appliances away from anything that might catch fire. Don't stack books or papers on computer monitors.

#### Before A Fire Breaks Out

In the event of a fire, a speedy response depends on how well people have prepared for emergencies. Here are some things employees and employers should do before a fire strikes.

#### What Employees Should Do -

- Count the doors or desks between your work areas and the nearest exit. During a fire, you may have to find your way out in the dark.
- Learn the location of alternative exits from all work areas.
- Know the location of the nearest fire alarm, and learn how to use it.
- Post the fire department's emergency phone number on or near all telephones.
- Be sure that someone in authority knows about anyone with a disability that could delay their escape.

- Conduct regular fire drills.
- Include disabled employees in the planning process for fire emergencies.

### **What To Do When A Fire Strikes -**

- Sound the alarm and call the fire department, no matter how small the fire appears to be.
- Leave the area quickly, closing doors as you go to contain the fire and smoke.
- If you encounter smoke or flames during your escape, use an alternative exit. Heat and smoke rise, leaving cleaner air near the floor. If you must exit through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees, keeping your head 12 to 20 inches above the floor.
- Test doors before opening them. While kneeling or crouching at the door, reach up as high as you can and touch the door, the knob, and the space between the door and its frame with the back of your hand. If the door is warm, use another escape route. If it is cool, open it slowly. Be prepared to close it quickly if you see smoke or flames.
- Follow directions given by fire and security personnel. Once outside, move away from the building, out of the way of firefighters. Remain outside until a firefighter says you can go back in.
- If you work in a high-rise building, check your fire plan. Some require workers in areas not directly involved in the fire to remain in the building until otherwise instructed by firefighters.
- One hundred percent accountability of personnel. It is important to have a predetermined rally point outside the building in order to get quick accountability and to ensure no one was left behind.

### **Portable Fire Extinguishers**

Most portable fire extinguishers are good only for fighting small, contained fires, such as a fire in a wastebasket. Be sure someone has called the fire department and that everyone has left the area before fighting a small fire. It is dangerous to fight a grease or electrical fire with an extinguisher that contains water. If you don't know how to operate a fire extinguisher, learn!